

Article

Designing Student Participation in Synchronous Writing Instruction

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Abstract

Although various e-learning technologies have been in use for decades, the rapid worldwide spread of COVID-19 has made online teaching and learning ‘the new normal’. Many academic units, such as our team of Learning Advisors at Auckland University of Technology, have had to make quick decisions about the design of online learning experiences for students. This study reports on the creation of online writing workshops for postgraduate research students. In our context, research students can self-enrol in ‘one-off’ workshops where they typically do not know each other. As teaching staff, we also had little prior knowledge of how best to design student participation in synchronous writing activities. An initial challenge was thus to identify different means through which students can participate online, and then use these findings to inform workshop design. Our findings centre on an online participation matrix with two sets of simultaneous options: whether participants are identified or not; and whether their participation occurs as a series of discrete actions by individuals, or as simultaneous actions by multiple participants. In Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, we found that these combinations give rise to observant, anonymous, episodic, concealed, or discursive participation. We define and illustrate each of these participation types, discuss their sequencing across an entire workshop, and reflect on specific adaptations from face to face settings. These findings are of particular relevance to teachers who are exploring a variety of software features and want to make principled choices for the design of activities in online writing workshops.

Keywords

Synchronous e-learning, writing instruction, learning design, research writing, guided practice

1 Introduction

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a rapid shift to online teaching for many tertiary

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institutions, there has long been a trend towards blended or mixed-mode delivery (Webb Peterson, 2001). These well-established changes in modes of delivery have led to the on-going review of traditional pedagogical approaches and the examination of how they need to be adapted or replaced in an online learning environment (Kalantzis & Cope, 2013). One area of significant research is how students relate to each other and to their teacher online. Researchers have, for example, examined community building (e.g., Lander, 2015; Vesley, Bloom & Sherlock, 2007; Wang, Sierra & Folger, 2003), online communities of inquiry (e.g., Berry, 2019; Garrison, Cleveland-Innes & Fung, 2004; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010) and learning communities (e.g., Brook & Oliver, 2003; Jan & Vlachopoulos, 2019). These studies have tended to focus on the development of relationships and practices over an extended period of time.

There has been far less research into what students do in ‘one-off’ online workshops, that is, a discrete workshop where content is not directly connected to other workshops. Teachers in such contexts, therefore, currently have little to guide them in how to engage students in online learning experiences that are bound to short time frames yet demand a high degree of participation. In synchronous teaching and learning, for example, there is often pressure for students to participate ‘in the moment’ and respond dynamically to contributions from others. This contrasts with asynchronous online environments where communication typically unfolds gradually over an extended period of time. Student participation is usually discontinuous, and this may provide them with more time for reflection, and also the flexibility to respond intermittently, rather than ‘right now’.

In terms of student participation, one contentious issue is the notion of ‘active’ participation and its value in relation to other ways in which students may be involved in face to face or online learning experiences (Bento & Schuster, 2003). As Hawkes (2019) identifies, teachers and students may have very different perceptions of what being active actually means, and what is considered sufficient participation for learning to occur. In Hawkes’ (2019) study, for example, tertiary students saw themselves as active participants during lectures. However, the lecturer and observing colleagues felt that student participation was insufficient. The interpretation offered is that the students may perceive behaviours, such as making eye contact, as ‘significant and sufficient facets of participation’, whereas those in a teaching role may expect more ‘direct teacher-student interaction’, such as students asking questions (p. 12). For the design of online teaching and learning experiences, such findings raise issues around how teachers expect students to participate through different modes and software features, and how they communicate those expectations. With the use of common online communication tools, such as Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, teachers have a range of software features to choose from in spoken, visual, and written modes. Students can participate flexibly through one mode or combinations of modes (e.g., Liang, 2010; Ludvigsen, Ness & Timiss, 2019). Teachers thus have many design choices for what they want students to do and how they want students to participate.

There is also long-standing interest in the value of what Lave and Wenger have called ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (1991, p. 29). This complex process includes an emphasis on the importance of social relations as learners gradually learn to participate more fully and gain a sense of belonging in specific communities (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005). This notion of a gradual shift from the periphery towards full participation or ‘growing involvement’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37) is particularly challenging for the design of learning experiences that are brief, segmented, and have ever-changing configurations of participants. In our context of two-hour workshops, for example, where the same group of students may never meet again, teachers have a finite period of time in which to create a transient learning community. The design challenge for such contexts is thus to determine what types of participation are possible, connect participants to each other, and develop a sequence of participation where students gradually become more involved.

This study reports on changes to teaching practices that were made by our academic unit of Learning Advisors at Auckland University of Technology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We focus on our rapid shift from teaching writing workshops in face to face classroom settings to teaching them online.

More specifically, we focus on writing workshops designed for postgraduate research students. These workshops are part of a series that is currently being developed to support students with research writing. They include a focus on the structure of a thesis as well as using language for specific functions, such as synthesising and critiquing research. There is no predetermined sequence for the order in which students self-enroll in workshops, or at which point in their studies students choose to do them. As such, each workshop is designed as a ‘stand-alone’ learning experience.

In this paper, we investigate what types of online student participation are possible in synchronous writing instruction. We start by discussing a pedagogic framework that informs the design of teaching and learning about academic writing development. We then introduce an online participation matrix that we developed specifically to identify different options for how students can participate online when using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. This matrix classifies types of online participation, which we then use to discuss the design of what students do across an entire workshop. We finish by reflecting on adaptations that were made from face to face versions of the online workshops and identify further areas of research. Overall, by sharing the ‘behind the scenes’ rationale for using specific software features for different types of online participation, this study aims to contribute to building knowledge of pedagogy-driven use of technology in online writing instruction.

2 The Pedagogic Framework Informing the Design of Writing Activity

The design choices for online workshops are like all other educational practices in that they are underpinned by values and beliefs about how students learn best and the role of the teacher in instruction (Bernstein, 1990, 1996/2000; Cazden, 1996; Martin, 2006; Maton, 2014; Rose, 2005). For our synchronous writing workshops, the aim is to explicitly teach new knowledge about research writing, and to create time for students to explore and practise new knowledge about writing during the workshop. These teaching goals are underpinned by the assumption that students benefit from social interaction in learning, combined with teachers sharing their expertise. In our context, a key rationale for these goals is that students usually start workshops without knowing each other, and they have varying degrees of experience and confidence with writing research in English. They therefore need both explicit teaching and practice time in order to connect with one another and to learn unfamiliar patterns of language use. To enact these teaching goals, we drew on the writing methodology, known as the Teaching and Learning Cycle (hereafter TLC) (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Rose & Martin, 2012; Rothery, 1996; Rothery & Stenglin, 1995). A recent representation of this cycle appears in Figure 1. As Humphrey (2017) explains, other variations have been used and developed over three decades ‘in response to different research contexts’ (p. 50).

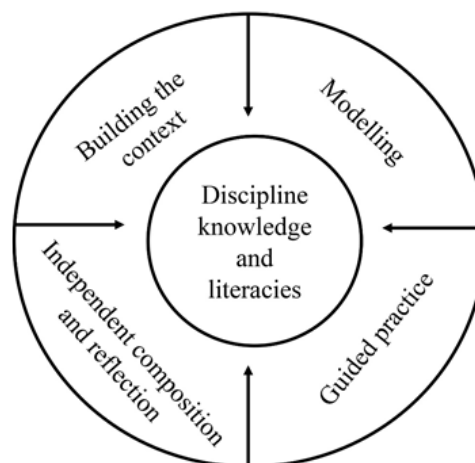


Figure 1. A text-based teaching and learning cycle (Humphrey & Feez, 2016)

Common to various representations of the TLC is a focus on preparing students for what they are expected to do. This emphasis on creating and crafting something for a particular social purpose is evident in describing the teaching and learning sequence as being both text-based (e.g., Feez, 1998/2006; Humphrey, 2017) and genre-based (e.g., Martin, 2009; Martin & Rose, 2005, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). In these descriptions, a focus on what students create encompasses not only wording, but also a full range of other resources for making meaning, such as images, graphs, gesture, sound, and colour, etc. In tertiary contexts, the TLC can be used to anticipate support for a wide range of tasks in different modes, such as students creating videos, giving oral presentations, and various writing tasks, such as blog critiques, posts in discussion boards, or research proposals, etc. In this study, students are writing theses in a postgraduate doctoral programme.

In order to anticipate student support, the TLC is organised into iterative steps or stages. As depicted in Figure 1, these steps are represented in a circular arrangement to highlight that the four steps (building the context, modelling, guided practice, and independent composition and reflection) may occur as a set more than once across a number of lessons or unit of work. In the first step of building the context, one key function is to provide an initial orientation to the assessment task, including critically reflecting on the purpose of the task and establishing key content or field. In writing for a doctoral thesis, for example, this could involve reflecting on and articulating the function of reviewing literature in relation to the whole thesis. (See specific examples of activities in this lesson stage in Appendix 2, and the illustration of one activity, in this step, called polling, in Figure 5.)

The second step of modelling involves analysing exemplar or model texts. It aims to identify and build a shared way of talking about effective language choices (or other semiotic features) for different contexts of use. One example of modelling is taking excerpts from journal articles or thesis chapters and annotating structural and linguistic features. (Appendix 3, for instance, illustrates an activity where students identify the function and sequence of excerpts from a section of a journal article where literature is reviewed. In an adaptation of Swales (1990), the term ‘move’ is used to talk about a part of text with a specific function.)

Further support is provided in the third step of guided practice. While this step commonly involves teachers taking a leading role in writing with students to co-create a text or part thereof (see examples of joint construction in Humphrey & Macnaught, 2011; Macnaught, 2018), other types of activity include rewriting texts (see joint rewriting in Rose & Martin, 2012), and, more broadly, activities where students are explicitly guided to explore and try out new ways of making meaning (see Humphrey, 2017). Crucial to the design of the TLC is that this guidance occurs before students are expected to independently apply new knowledge in their own work. The overall goal of guided practice is summarised in the pedagogic principle of ‘guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience’ (Martin, 1999, p. 126; after Painter, 1986). (See Figure 7 for an example of guided practice related to small groups of students rewriting an excerpt with the teacher available to provide support as needed).

The final step of independent composition and reflection includes students writing on their own. It is designed for students to integrate what they have learned in the prior steps (Humphrey, 2017). In our teaching and learning context, workshops are open to all postgraduate research students from all faculties. This means that when students write independently, they need to relate examples and principles from the workshops to their specific research topic and discipline. For example, they need to consider the extent to which examples of language for justifying new research are appropriate to their own thesis writing. In this regard, our broad aim of using the TLC for designing student activity in online writing workshops is to gradually increase the ability of students to analyse texts, and to provide them with time to practice making deliberate language choices.

While a small number of studies have explored adapting the TLC for online tertiary teaching and learning (e.g., Dreyfus, Humphrey, Mahboob & Martin, 2016; Dreyfus & Macnaught, 2013), these have involved series of lessons and cohorts of students who are studying together over an extended period of

time. The condensed time frame (2 hours in duration) of our workshops, however, makes it challenging to quickly build the rapport and trust that is needed for collaborative activities, such as students writing together. We are therefore not only investigating how students can participate online, but also interested in the extent to which guided practice can be enacted in our particular online teaching and learning context.

3 Identifying Options for the Design of Online Participation

In order to shift quickly from face to face to online teaching, we first needed to identify different means through which students could participate in synchronous writing activities. However, many writing methodologies are designed for face to face teaching (such as the TLC described in the previous section), rather than for online teaching. Additionally, current frameworks about online teaching tend to focus less on the design of specific activities, and more on the ‘big picture’, such as broadly theorising multiple dimensions of student engagement (e.g., Borup, Graham, West, Archambault & Spring, 2020), or generating design principles for application in writing instruction (e.g., Greer & Harris, 2018). It was therefore difficult to find a practical framework for making choices about what students do.

3.1 The online participation matrix

In the absence of a practical framework suited to the design of synchronous online writing workshops, we developed an online participation matrix. Here, participation refers broadly to how students connect with the online classroom space and what they are expected to do. Matrix refers to the online environment in which different choices arise. In the case of using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, the matrix involves the interplay between software features that are available for use, such as the chat and video functions, the behaviour of students who choose to join the online writing workshop, and how teachers design what students are expected to do. Within this particular online environment, we identified two sets of simultaneous options that teachers must consider when designing student activity: whether participants are identified or not; and whether participation occurs as a series of discrete actions by individuals, or as simultaneous actions by multiple participants. A key difference here is that serial activity is oriented towards individual or ‘singular’ contributions that occur one after the other, whereas simultaneous events are oriented towards more flexible and dynamic group activity. The cross-classification of these choices gives rise to four main parameters for participation:

- 1) unidentified + serial;
- 2) unidentified + simultaneous;
- 3) identified + serial;
- 4) identified + simultaneous.

These combinations are represented in Figure 2.

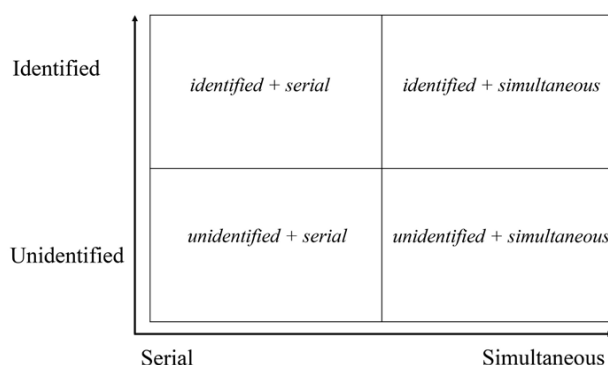


Figure 2. Parameters of the online participation matrix

As shown in Figure 2, an affordance of online participation via tools such as Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is that the identity of students can remain anonymous. For example, students can participate in an online voting activity, called ‘polling’ (see an example in Figure 5) where only the distribution of choices or ‘votes’ and total number of responses is visible. Students can thus participate with an obscured identity. Similarly, when listening to a teacher explain something, students may be instructed to have their own videos and microphones turned off. At that particular point in the lesson, students are not being asked to identify themselves or make individual contributions. These choices contrast with participation where personal identification is ‘built-in’ to the design. For instance, when individual students are asked to type chat messages, their name appears with what they have typed, and both are displayed for all participants to see. Although this paper does not further explore issues of identity, the choices about students being identified or not are a point of difference with face to face teaching and learning environments where student activity may be consistently visible.

3.2 The development and trial period

The development period of the online participation matrix was approximately three weeks. This aligned with Aotearoa New Zealand commencing lockdown in late March, 2020, due to Covid-19. At this time, the university mid-semester break was moved forward and extended, and all teaching staff at Auckland University of Technology had approximately three to four weeks to prepare for a complete shift to online teaching. For our Learning Success team, this meant that academic staff working in the area of research writing development had time to prepare and trial online writing workshops and other resources.

We first explored the possibilities for participation (as previously identified) in mock workshops with other staff in our unit. Our initial concern was building staff confidence with the functionality of software features, which then enabled a sharper focus on what we wanted to use them for in our teaching. We also examined teaching materials from our existing face to face workshops to consider whether and how we could make online adaptations. Under significant time pressure, we proceeded to trial our initial adaptations with students. We used our existing workshop schedule to teach one iteration of three different workshops. These writing workshops were scheduled prior to timetabling changes that resulted from our university’s response to the pandemic. Research students attended in groups of approximate 15-20. These students were already enrolled in workshops before online teaching began, and they were notified of the change to online delivery. After these initial online iterations, we had a further week to reflect on and revise all workshop materials.

As a result of this preparation period, we were able to populate the matrix by identifying five specific types of student participation and align software features to these types. These types are introduced in the findings section. Overall, this process of analysing options for how students can participate provided us with a way of talking about (and debating the use of) software features for different aims and activities. In other words, it gave us a shared pedagogic metalanguage (Rose, 2014, 2018) for refining our trial versions and continuing to create new online workshops.

4 The Context and Data

The writing workshops delivered by our team are part of the Graduate Research School’s postgraduate seminar series. Any postgraduate research student (domestic or international, or with English as L1 or L2) can voluntarily enroll in workshops. Prior to the workshop, students have usually had little contact with other workshop participants. They can enroll in workshops at any stage of their doctoral studies, and the workshops are broadly relevant to students from a range of disciplines. (At AUT many faculties also provide more discipline-specific research support.) At the time of writing, the current doctoral cohort at AUT consists of approximately 40% international students from many countries, such as India, China, Iran, Vietnam, and other parts of the world. Many of these students are researching and writing in English

as an additional language. Like international students, domestic students also typically bring with them a range of research writing experiences and varying levels of confidence with research writing.

The findings in this paper draw on our experience of teaching four different online workshops in a combined total of 34 iterations across a four-week teaching period. The forthcoming examples are indicative of our design choices, and are derived from one two-hour online workshop, titled Writing Literature Review Sections. This workshop targets research students who are towards the beginning of their doctoral studies and want an overview of how literature reviews relate to the thesis as a whole.

Data focuses on the teaching materials, including PowerPoint slides, and related online workshop activities. In the face to face versions of these workshops, we typically have a maximum enrollment of 20 students with average attendance being approximately 16-18 students per session. In adapting the workshops for online delivery, however, we did not know whether to expect four or 40. As students can book into a workshop until shortly before it commences, and they may share workshop links with peers, we had to design teaching materials and activities for a wide variation in attendance.

For online delivery, we used Blackboard Collaborate Ultra as made readily available by our university. Like similar communication tools, such as Zoom, this communication tool has a range of software features. The main features that we considered for possible use include: main room, breakout room, public chat, private chat, microphone, video, share content and poll. (Please see Appendix 1 for descriptions of their functionality.) Our teaching team did not use the whiteboard feature. A key limitation is that anything written on the whiteboard is not easily saved when there is a change in activity. We therefore used other means of creating a communal writing space and file sharing, as the following section will illustrate.

5 Findings: Types of Online Participation

This section reports on the main types of online participation that are classified using the parameters in the online participation matrix. They include: observant, anonymous, concealed, episodic and discursive participation. These five types are positioned in the online participation matrix in Figure 3. In this section, each type will be defined, and examples will illustrate how specific software features in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra are used to enable students to participate in distinctive and reoccurring ways. However, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between software features and participation types; rather, specific software features can be used flexibly to enable one or more different types of participation. The following section then examines the design and sequencing of online participation across an entire online writing workshop.

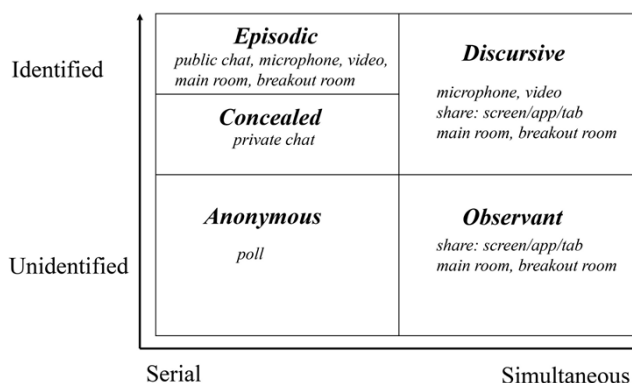


Figure 3. The populated online participation matrix

5.1 Observant participation

The first type of online participation that is classified through the participation matrix is called observant participation. It is characterised by participants simultaneously watching and listening to group-oriented

activity without contributing. In our online writing workshops, observant participation typically involves a short period where the teacher is explaining something to the whole class, and students are not yet expected to do anything with the new knowledge that is being introduced. In Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, software features that enable this type of participation include using the share content function in the main room. For example, in Figure 4, the teacher is sharing a PowerPoint slide to verbally and visually explain why justifying new research is critical to the process of reviewing literature. While all students can view the slide and hear the teacher, they are not yet expected to start an activity. In this particular workshop, the teacher's explanation serves as a foundation for students doing activities where they examine language choices that make justifying research easy for the reader to see. (Please see Appendix 2 for the full sequence of activities in the entire workshop.)

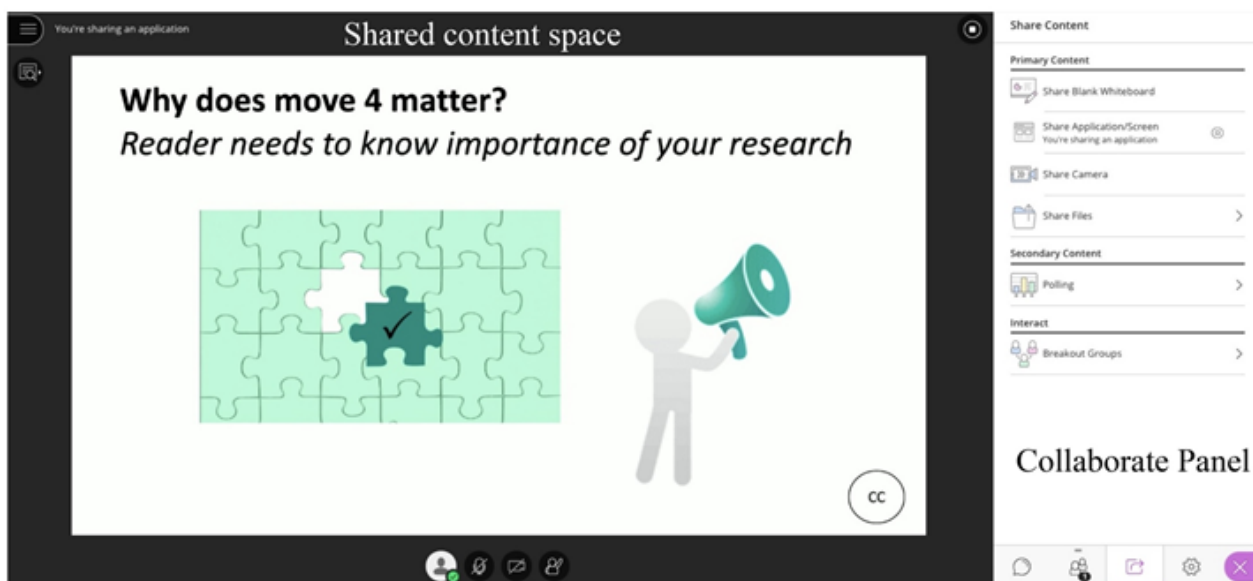


Figure 4. Using the share content feature for observant participation

5.2 Anonymous participation

The second type of online participation is called anonymous participation. It is characterised by participants individually doing something, but only the outcome of their actions is visible to others, and not their identities. In Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, a software feature that enables this type of participation is a poll. With this feature, students can choose one of the options created by the teacher. An example from our online literature review workshop is an activity where students first find a thesis in their discipline, identify where a review of literature is predominantly located, and use the poll feature to select the option that matches what they found. The example poll in Figure 5 exemplifies what is visible to the whole class: the poll options, the distribution of choices, as well as the total number of students who did not respond. In this example, the polling activity provides a first step for students to think about variation in literature reviews and the need to examine thesis examples and different options in their own disciplines and fields of study.

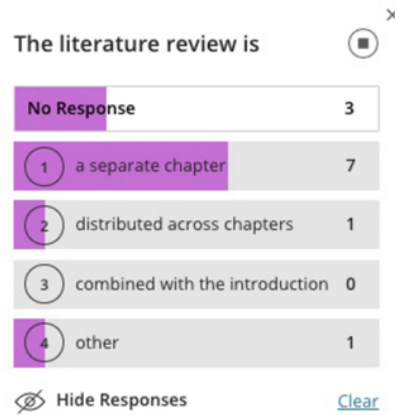


Figure 5. Using the polling software feature for anonymous participation

5.3 Episodic participation

The third type of online participation is called episodic participation. Unlike the previous participation types, it is characterised by public participation, meaning all others can see who is contributing. The participation is oriented towards individuals communicating in a series of one or more short contributions that occur one after the other. There is little expectation that participants respond to each other. An analogy is that participation is like a series of individual arrows shot by different archers who are standing in the same field and aiming towards a common target. An example from our online literature review workshop is directing students to use the chat feature (with their microphone and video turned off) and asking them to reflect on what they currently know about writing literature reviews. In the chat window, students typically write one or more chat messages that appear vertically on the screen with a time stamp. (See a time stamp example in Figure 6.) A typical series of student answers where they share their existing knowledge about literature reviews is exemplified below.

Student 1: There are many types

Student 2: It should narrow down to our purpose of study

Student 3: It draws on knowledge from other people's articles

Student 2: It should clarify gaps as well

Student 4: It's going through research to see what has been said about a topic

Such episodic participation may occur very rapidly with little time to consider, integrate or even read previous responses from other students. As such, individual participants tend to focus on crafting their own messages. In comparison to anonymous participation, episodic participation arguably places a greater demand on students in that they are being asked to craft a message, rather than only make a selection from a pre-defined list. However, students are not expected to do anything with the contributions of others.

5.4 Concealed participation

The fourth type of online participation is called concealed participation. It is characterised by participants identifying an individual to communicate with, and making contact without their contact being visible to the wider group. In Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, an example of using a software feature that enables this type of participation is the private chat function. This function is available from student to student and also between teachers. For example, in instances where more than one teacher is allocated to an

online workshop, or for teacher training purposes, teachers can send a private chat to each other. As shown in Figure 6, the workshop coordinator initiates contact with the teacher delivering the workshop to ask if help is needed, but their series of messages is not visible to anyone else. In comparison to episodic participation, concealed participation arguably involves a higher degree of participation because the process of deliberately selecting a target receiver and crafting personalised communication creates an expectation for further communication.

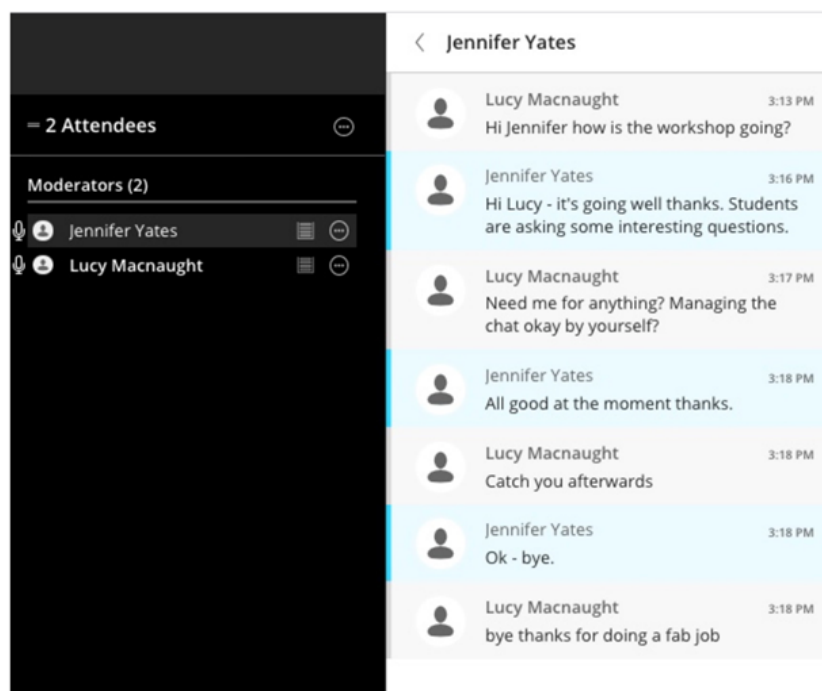


Figure 6: Using the private chat function for concealed participation

5.5 Discursive participation

The fifth and final type of online participation that is classified through the participation matrix is called discursive participation. As with episodic participation, the participants are identifiable. However, unlike the inflexible serial structure of episodic or concealed participation, discursive participation involves more flexible and dynamic contributions: they may be simultaneous or overlapping, such as students speaking or writing at the same time. A further distinctive feature is that meanings are carried through time. By this we mean that something is communicated and responded to, which, in turn, generates further on-going communication. While concealed participation also involves a degree of back and forth communication, it is only with one other individual. However, in discursive participation, multiple participants are crafting and responding to each other's messages. It is thus in sharp contrast to the 'one-way arrows' of episodic participation, and arguably demands a far higher degree of participation than all other types.

An example of discursive participation is a collaborative writing activity that uses breakout rooms and a shared link to a Microsoft Word document. One specific activity is where students work together to rewrite a short passage of text. A typical example is illustrated in Figure 7. In this activity, small groups of students (usually two to four) are put in breakout rooms. They practice using a move starter to contrast research findings. (In this case, the move starter is the bold text: This finding is contrary to an earlier study which argues that...). In their small breakout groups of three to five participants, students may simultaneously write in the same shared document. To differentiate between writers, an initial appears where each writer/student has their cursor. For example, in Figure 7, the top right corner has a small

‘v’ to identify the writer whose name starts with ‘v’. While working on a shared document, students frequently also use varying combinations of the chat, microphone or video functions, as illustrated in the chat box in Figure 7. This additional space provides an opportunity for students to ‘muse aloud’ about their writing (such as saying, I’m not sure about my one), offering praise (such as, I like yours better than mine) and asking each other questions (such as, have I paraphrased enough?). As subsequent sections will elaborate, designing and encouraging students to participate discursively about writing is particularly challenging in our teaching and learning context.

Writing in a shared document

*Previous research has argued that changes to the identity of migrants is caused by changes that occur as result of the process of migration, such as changes to a migrant's occupation and sense of place (Hout & Laliberete Rudman, 2010). **This finding is contrary to an earlier study which argues that, in the case of Canadian migrant women, shifts in occupation were a result of changes to physical, social, cultural and political environments (Martins & Reid, 2007).***

Chat about the writing

Not sure about my one 11:40 AM
I've got 'changes' x4!

Nice! 😊 Bit different...like 11:41 AM
yours better than mine


Thanks tho is this what 11:41 AM
we're meant to be doing?
Have I paraphrased enough?

Figure 7. Simultaneous use of a shared document and chat in a breakout room for discursive participation

5.6 Summary of participation options

The previous examples have illustrated a range of choices for designing online student participation using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. A summary appears in Table 1. In this table, each type is positioned on a cline of less to more demanding participation. In order of gradually increasing demands on what students are expected to do, these are: observant, anonymous, episodic, concealed, and discursive. This cline does not represent value judgments about participation. It also does not rigidly delineate what a specific software feature can or cannot be used for during synchronous writing instruction. Teachers may, for example, deliberately shift between less to more demanding participation depending on a range of factors, such as the purpose of a particular lesson stage, the timing of teaching in relation to a whole programme, the use of multiple e-learning technologies, or the degree of prior contact students have had with each other. In the following section, we apply these findings to the sequencing of student activity in the design of our online writing workshops.

Table 1
Less to More Demanding Online Participation

	Online participation type	Characteristics	Examples of technology use
	<i>Observant</i>	Participants view and listen to group-oriented activity without contribution or revealing their identities.	Listening & viewing slides in the main room as the teacher provides an explanation about the purpose of a literature review.
	<i>Anonymous</i>	Participants individually do something but only the outcome of their actions (and not their identity) is visible.	Selecting one option in a poll about where reviewing literature is predominately located.
	Episodic	Participants make public identifiable contributions, but with little expectation to respond to others. It occurs as a series of short individual contributions.	Answering a reflective question about new knowledge to take away from the workshop using public chat in the main room .
	Concealed	Participants select another individual to communicate with and the communication between them is not visible to the wider group. A response is expected.	Sending and responding to a personalised private chat message .
More demanding participation	Discursive	Participants are identifiable. Contributions are simultaneous or overlapping and generate on-going communication.	Using a shared document for a collaborative writing activity while also using the chat , microphone or video to talk about writing.

6 Findings: The Design of Online Participation across a Whole Workshop

The first deliberate choice for the design of whole workshops is to teach new knowledge in short segments. This choice involves designing short periods of observant participation alternating with other participation types, such as episodic or discursive. This alternating pattern is represented in Figure 8. The main rationale for alternating participation in this way is so that, after bursts of explicit instruction, students can immediately practise exploring and using new knowledge during the workshop.



Figure 8. Alternating observant participation

This alternating sequence of participation is particularly suited to the pedagogic goals of the building context and modelling steps. As previously outlined, these steps include making the reason and purpose of a task clear, and providing students with the experience of analysing and exploring text examples, such as excerpts from a thesis. For instance, the building context stage of the literature review workshop involves the teacher using slides in the main room to explain the purpose of the literature review (observant participation from students). Here, the teacher's explanation includes the contribution of the literature review in establishing the need for the writer's own research. The students are then put into breakout rooms and asked to use the chat, microphone, or video to introduce themselves, share what their research topic is, explain why it is needed/important, and ask each other questions (discursive participation). They then return to observant participation when the teacher uses slides in the main room to identify different options for where literature can be reviewed in the structure of a thesis. More demanding participation follows when students are introduced to a thesis repository, asked to find a thesis in their own field, and then use a poll feature to report back on where the literature review is located (anonymous participation). This alternating sequence of participation can thus be identified as follows: observant > discursive > observant > anonymous. Such sequencing enables the teacher to introduce new knowledge in segments, and students are then expected to immediately do something with that knowledge. (Please see Appendix 2 for the full sequence of activities in the entire workshop.)

From a classroom management perspective, a further reason for designing online participation in this way is to reduce the possibility of either the teacher or students feeling disconnected from each other for an extended period. In trial versions of our workshops with students, we sometimes experienced the feeling of speaking 'into a void'. By this we mean communicating to students without any verbal or non-verbal response. In the absence of the visual monitoring strategies afforded by face to face teaching, regular intervals of student activity (or the absence of it) provides immediate feedback about the extent to which students are making an effort to engage with new knowledge during the workshop. Alternating observant participation with more demanding participation is, in part, a response to this challenge of maintaining contact with students in an online classroom space.

The second deliberate design choice is to gradually increase the degree of expected contribution across the whole workshop. In terms of types of participation, this choice involves a gradual shift towards discursive participation. It is a design choice that we came to through trial and error. In early iterations

of our workshops, we observed an element of ‘stage fright’, that is, if we asked for more demanding participation about writing choices early on, then students did not participate through any of the available software features. They were, however, willing to talk about themselves and their own research, and ask each other questions. We thus drew on these early findings to develop a sequence of participation where students have the opportunity to establish rapport with one another early on, engage in less demanding activities first, and then participate in more complex writing activities, such as rewriting a text in small groups. Designing a gradual shift towards discursive participation is exemplified in Figure 9. This example maps participation types across the lesson stages of building context, modelling and guided practice. (See Appendix 2 for all activity details).

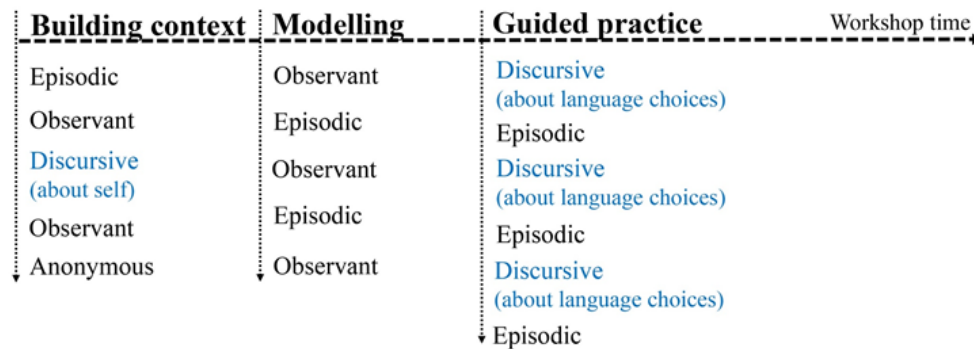


Figure 9. A gradual shift towards discursive online participation

Discursive online participation is particularly suited to the step of guided practice, as shown in Figure 9. At this point in the workshop design, students have already been introduced to new knowledge about writing. They have a shared way of talking about it, and they can now practice applying new knowledge by producing short excerpts of writing. For instance, in the literature review workshop, the students have already been introduced to parts of text with specific reoccurring functions, such as introducing a research field, synthesising past research, critiquing specific research findings, and justifying the need for new research. They have also completed a short series of activities to identify language that signals the purpose of specific text parts clearly for the reader. An example of language for the function of critiquing past research is: A limitation of this approach is that it does not adequately consider X. In guided practice, students are now asked to complete rewriting activities. An example is where students choose an alternate ‘move starter’ and integrate it with preceding and subsequent wording. (See Figure 7 for an example of rewriting.) In order to complete this kind of collaborative writing activity, discursive online participation is expected. Students are encouraged to ask each other questions, explain reasoning, and explore alternate answers to activities.

From an interpersonal perspective, a key rationale for the timing of such discursive participation is that it can build on positive experiences of prior participation during the workshop. When students already have multiple experiences of episodic participation, then respectfully sharing possible answers is an established norm. The breakout room can then be utilised as a safe space where there is more time to try out or rehearse ideas with the anticipation of peer support and further guidance from the teacher as needed. In terms of classroom management, our initial observations are that the use of breakout rooms for discursive participation is critical to mitigating the stage fright that students may experience when asked to share something with all students in the main room. Students seem more likely to participate when in smaller groups, and also more likely to participate in the main room if they have been in smaller groups first. However, as the final section of this paper will discuss, a number of unanswered questions remain with regards to maximising how students discursively talk about writing.

7 Differences Between Face to Face Activities and Their Online Adaptations

One of the unresolved challenges of adapting face-to-face workshops to an online learning environment involves re-designing activities with kinesthetic elements. By kinesthetic we mean activities that involve tactile, hands-on tasks, such as physically ordering parts of a jigsaw reading into a coherent whole or arranging excerpts of texts under appropriate headings. As also observed by Fitze (2006), in our face to face writing workshops, we find that hands-on activities often promote the verbalisation of thought processes and the negotiation of meaning between students. This occurs, for example, when students are asked to arrange and order a sequence of text parts in relation to their function. However, this type of physical movement and accompanying interaction seems difficult to generate in an online classroom. For instance, the aforementioned activity involving groups of two or three students touching and reordering text parts is currently reduced to an individual ‘matching’ activity with students posting their individual answers in chat. (See an example in Appendix 3.) This attempted online adaptation indicates that some dynamic activities in physical classroom spaces may be restricted to episodic participation. These findings provoke further inquiry as to whether the replication or adaptation of existing activities is a fruitful point of departure (Kalantzis & Cope, 2013).

A further challenge relates to reading activities, and in particular the use of longer texts. One such activity, in the face to face version of our literature review workshop, involves students reading and analysing examples of writing from their own research field. They are asked to find similarities, variations, or differences in the patterns of language use that they have seen in previous examples. This kind of activity to locate and then closely read parts of a thesis requires sustained and silent individual activity. In face to face classroom settings, a teacher can often easily monitor what students are doing. Students can also physically point to a text part and ask for clarification or further explanation. In an online classroom, however, a student can only ‘point’ to a part of text if they share a file in a breakout room or the main room. The process of uploading, sharing and identifying specific wording is time consuming. Teachers also cannot simultaneously monitor multiple students who are reading different texts. The risk posed by individual and extended reading online, therefore, is one involving ‘black holes’ where neither the teacher nor the students know what others are doing. Long periods of silence may mean students are actively completing the set task, distracted by their mobile phone, have taken a bathroom break, or are examining the contents of their fridge! The teacher simply has little way of knowing, because so many of the visual signals about student engagement in face to face classroom settings are absent. Further research is clearly needed to examine how to effectively incorporate reading in online synchronous workshops.

8 Looking Back and Looking Forward

This paper has focused on the shift from face to face to online teaching, due to COVID-19 related restrictions. It has reported on the design of synchronous writing workshops for postgraduate research students. A particular challenge of our context is that workshop participants typically do not know one another, and workshop content must stand alone as a discrete offering. Additionally, like many academic staff around the world, we have had to make a quick transition to online teaching. Although many frameworks exist for conceptualising online teaching and learning, we needed one oriented towards teaching practice. For us, this meant practical guidance about what types of student participation are possible when using specific technologies, such as Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. We also sought clear pedagogic reasoning for using specific software features to enable students to participate in different ways across an entire workshop.

In response to this context, we developed an online participation matrix, and we used it to identify options for how students can participate through Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. More specifically, by

cross classifying the parameters of the matrix, we identified five types of participation that place less to greater demands on students: observant, anonymous, episodic, concealed, and discursive. The examples shown in this paper have illustrated how discursive participation is a design choice that is particularly demanding for students. It is demanding because students have the flexibility to make simultaneous or overlapping contributions by using multiple software features at once. It is also demanding because students are expected to continuously participate and dynamically respond to each other. Although we identified that software features, such as breakout rooms, are particularly conducive to such dynamic activity, they do not guarantee that discursive participation will happen. Put succinctly, the use of breakout rooms does not ensure that students ‘break in’ to extended and dynamic communication with each other.

A further finding was that discursive online participation aligns particularly well with the step of guided practice in the TLC. Given that one of our key teaching goals was to provide workshop time for students to practice using new knowledge, a major concern was the extent to which guided practice can be enacted online. Our findings indicate that guided practice, such as the use of rewriting activities, is certainly possible online. However, an on-going issue is better supporting students with talking at length and in depth about language choices. With this concern in mind, the timing of more demanding participation seems to matter greatly. In trial versions of our workshops, we found an element of online stage fright – where students did not use any software features to participate – if discursive participation about analysing or writing texts was introduced early. Additionally, even when discursive participation was designed for later lesson stages, such as in guided practice, students often talked tentatively about language choices. Indicative comments, such as ‘I like yours better than mine’, invite further inquiry into how to use the initial reactions of students as a stepping-stone towards further reasoning about ‘what works’ and why.

Another finding about the sequencing of online participation concerns the step of modelling. We found that observant online participation was particularly useful in this step when it alternated with more demanding types of participation, such as observant participation followed by episodic participation. Such alternating contributed to organising workshop activity into short segments where teachers introduced new knowledge, and then students could immediately explore and apply that new knowledge.

The findings from this study invite further investigation into how the design of online participation may better promote and encourage students to share reasoning and seek clarification about writing choices. In this regard, drawing on methods of discourse analysis that focus on the flow of meaning (e.g., Martin & Rose, 2007) and the substantial body of research related to classroom talk (Alexander 2001; Christie, 2002; Lee, 2007; Nassaji, 2013; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992; Rose, 2014, 2018 – to mention a few) is likely to generate further insights about the interpersonal and structural elements of online participation that are critical to designing writing activities in synchronous workshops. Robust linguistic analysis is also likely to sharpen and refine the existing criteria for participation types, and this could be usefully deployed to compare and contrast wide-ranging data. Although more difficult and time-consuming to access, studies with student data, such as transcripts from breakout rooms, are essential for generating findings about design choices that are not only driven by pedagogic reasoning, but also informed by the close examination of what students do as they write together in an online workshop.

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Appendix 1.

The Software Options in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra - Considered in Our Workshop Design

Software feature	Description
Main room	The main online classroom space for all participants.
Breakout room	Small group spaces created by the moderator (teacher).
Public chat	Typed messages that appear in a communal chat box with visible names of the message creators and a time stamp.
Private chat	Typed messages sent privately between two individuals.
Microphone	Audio function that can be flexibly turned on and off.
Video	Video function that can be flexibly turned on and off.
Share content	File, application, screen or chrome tab sharing that can be used flexibly to populate the main room or breakout room.
Poll	Moderator (teacher) created list of alternate options from which participants make one selection. This selection is only visible to other participants as an overall tally without revealing identities of who made what choice.

Appendix 2.

Designing Online Participation in the Literature Review Workshop

Teaching and Learning Cycle stage	Lesson Flow	Designed participation type	Software feature	Description
	Set up	Observant	Main room poll chat	<i>Teacher welcomes students and prepares them for the use software features; students may take the initiative to play with software features.</i>
Building context	Activity 1: Reflection on current knowledge	Episodic	Chat	<i>Series of individual responses; no expectations for students to respond to each other; teacher repeats and summarises chat wording and integrates responses to the teaching point.</i>
	Purpose of literature review	Observant	Main room	<i>Teacher introduces new knowledge about research writing.</i>
	Activity 2: Research contribution	Discursive	Breakout room	<i>Time for interpersonal connections between students and for them to start talking about their own research.</i>
	Location options for literature reviews	Observant	Main room	<i>Teacher introduces new knowledge about research writing.</i>
	Activity 3: Identify location	Anonymous	Poll	<i>Students select one of the options in the poll created by the teacher.</i>
Modelling	Reoccurring moves & their function	Observant	Main room	<i>Teacher introduces new knowledge about research writing.</i>
	Activity 4: Identifying moves	Episodic	Chat Main room	<i>Matching text parts to their overall function; if students ask questions then participation may shift to Discursive.</i>
	Why moves matter	Observant	Main room	<i>Teacher introduces new knowledge about research writing.</i>
	Activity 5: Matching move starters and moves	Episodic	Chat Main room	<i>Matching language that creates a shift in the function of a text part; if students ask questions then participation may shift to Discursive.</i>
	Rewriting moves	Observant	Main room	<i>Teacher introduces new knowledge about research writing.</i>

Guided writing practice	Activity 6a: Small group rewrite	Discursive	Breakout room + OneDrive document link + chat option + mic option + video option	<i>Students work together to write one possible answer.</i>
		Episodic	Chat Main room	<i>Small groups share their answers with the whole class; teacher reads out chat wording and affirms answers.</i>
		Discursive	Chat Main room	<i>If students ask questions and/or the teacher asks students to elaborate and share reasoning, then participation may shift to Discursive.</i>
Individual composition and reflection	Activity 6b: Individual rewrite	Episodic	Chat Main room	<i>Individual students write and then share their answer; teacher reads out chat wording and affirms answers.</i>
		Discursive	Chat Main room	<i>If students ask questions and/or the teacher asks students to elaborate and share reasoning, then participation may shift to Discursive.</i>
	Activity 7: Reflection on new knowledge	Episodic	Chat	<i>Series of individual responses; no expectations for students to respond to each other; teacher repeats and summarises chat wording; affirms students.</i>
Wrap up	Summary	Observant	Main room	<i>Teacher summarises key teaching points and thanks students.</i>
	Farewell	Episodic	Chat	<i>Student initiated final messages (such as words of thanks to the teacher).</i>

Appendix 3.

Example of a student task in the Modelling lesson stage

Activity instructions

- 1) Read four text* parts labelled A, B, C and D.
- 2) Identify each part as Move** 1, 2, 3 or 4
- 3) Write your answers in **chat**, e.g, move 1 = C, etc.

Activity slide

Move 1 Identify field Move 2 Synthesise ideas Move 3 Critique past research Move 4 Justify your research

A. Furthermore, although the studies discussed provide key insights into aspects of everyday living as experienced by Indian immigrant women in a Western context, they have not fully explored how immigrants' daily occupations are transactions with their new environment, shaped by immigrants' efforts to settle in an environment that is by degrees unfamiliar, welcoming and unwelcoming.

B. Within the literature two specific occupations have been studied: parenting and work. As highlighted in the introduction, however, there is a lack of research specifically addressing the occupational experiences of Indian immigrant women.

C. Together, this research provides greater understanding of the importance of occupations during settlement, the links between occupation and identity and the environmental influences on occupation. However, questions such as how does occupation unfold over time and how do immigrants choose which occupations to engage in, still remain unanswered.

D. Huot and Laliberte Rudman (2010) also posited that identity for immigrants is likely to change as a result of shifts in occupation and sense of place that arise out of immigration, while Martins and Reid (2007) contended that the shifts in occupation that occur for immigrant women in Canada arise from changes in the physical, social, cultural and political environments.

*The text is an excerpt from:

Nayar, S., Hocking, C. & Giddings, L. (2012). Using occupation to navigate cultural spaces: Indian immigrant women settling in New Zealand. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 19(1), 62-75.

**The term 'move' and descriptions of types of moves are adapted from Swales.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Activity answers (showing that 'moves' are not limited to one text part)

Move 1 Identify field Move 2 Synthesise ideas Move 3 Critique past research Move 4 Justify your research

B. Within the literature two specific occupations have been studied: parenting and work. As highlighted in the introduction, however, there is a lack of research specifically addressing the occupational experiences of Indian immigrant women.

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